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NEWSLETTER — "In every war there's a Hiroshima waiting to happen" — December, 1990

Volume 4, Number 4 — Editor: Kerry Jellison

Are There Alternatives to War?

The buildup of American troops in the Persian Gulf in the past month appears to be the result of a widespread conviction that economic sanctions have proved ineffective against Saddam Hussein, and that the only way to deal with this dangerous bully is a military action. At first, President Bush's decision to escalate our military presence in Saudi Arabia seemed to enjoy the support of the majority of Americans; the sentiment often heard was a desire to "get it over with." What we less often hear is a discussion of exactly what "it" would entail, or what we could expect to gain from "it."

Popular support for such a military solution is now waning, however. Part of the reason is that knowledgable commentators from all political persuasions are asking if the ideals at stake genuinely justify the horrific risks of a war with Iraq. It has never been made adequately clear, for example, whether the conflict is about violation of international law, with associated issues of regional stability, or if it has more to do with cheap oil. Conservative Republicans such as Patrick Buchanan and Jean Kirkpatrick have begun to insist on answers to such basic questions as what a war might accomplish and what the various costs might be. It has seemed very possible that the United States could be drifting into a policy that could engage us in a protracted crisis with potentially very negative consequences.

What might some of these negative consequences be? Large numbers of casualties must head the list. What the toll would be is unknown, but 45,000 U.S. deaths could result in a very short time. Zbigniew Brzezinski (Christian Science Monitor, 15 Nov. 1990) warned that a "get it over quickly" scenario would initially involve heavy bombing that could kill tens of thousands of Iraq civilians. Should air power fail to crack the morale of Iraq (as it failed to do in Vietnam), then land fighting would have to commence as well, with the very heavy casualties to both Americans and Iraqis that would be inevitable in such a scenario. Deaths exceeding 100,000 Americans is not an excessive estimate. And suppose the U.S. should prevail in such a bloody confrontation? What kind of government would we hope to see in Baghdad? What conceivable support would a U.S.-sponsored government enjoy in an Arab region that had just been devastated by American military might? Would there be anything left of Kuwait to govern after a bitter urban war? Will U.S. troops have to remain deployed in the region for decades after the defeat to prop up the regional instability that would be sure to follow?

These are questions it does not appear the Bush Administration has bothered to address. Fortunately, members of Congress--from both sides of the aisle--and the American public are starting to insist that they be brought to open debate. The spectre of a war being waged without a

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United Nations Convene to Consider a Comprehensive Test Ban

Over 100 nations will meet at the UN January 7-18, 1991, to consider converting the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) into a comprehensive test ban (CTB) treaty. The Bush Administration is opposed to such an amendment and is set to block progress on this important issue.

The crisis in the Persian Gulf points out the inherent inconsistency of the U.S. position. While the Administration talks of the dangers of nuclear proliferation and the need to block Iraq's attempt to build a nuclear bomb, even by going to war, the U.S. is preventing the nations of the world from enacting a CTB. In the words of Paul Warnke, former SALT II negotiator: "The Middle East situation demonstrates the importance of having a comprehensive test ban. It's the single best non-proliferation weapon we've got." The U.S. must agree to stop its own nuclear weapons development program and take a leadership role to lessen nuclear tensions globally through a total ban on nuclear testing. Last year the UN voted 130 to 2 in favor of a CTB. Only the United States and South Africa voted against the resolution.

At the recent review of the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), a joint statement was blocked by the US's continuing opposition to a ban on testing. The NPT recognizes the importance of a CTB in its Preamble and calls on nations to "pursue negotiations in good faith to end the nuclear arms race at an early date." The NPT, which was signed by 140 nations, has limited the spread of nuclear weapons throughout the world. Many nations are disheartened with the US's position on testing and are threatening to withdraw support for the NPT when it expires in 1995.

The United States must change its position and agree to support efforts at the International Test Ban Conference in January to amend the PTBT to prevent all nuclear testing worldwide.

NEXT SNAP MEETING
Sunday Dec 16, 6 pm

Place: Carla Scheidlinger's, 393 Mt Tom Rd. Bishop
Time: Potluck 6 pm, Meeting 7 pm

- Call 873-8439 for directions

We will discuss the current status of a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban, and the upcoming Jan 5 action at the Nevada Test Site. We will also discuss the current crisis in the Persian Gulf, and local grassroots efforts to support a peaceful resolution.

Thanks to thoses who contributed to this newsletter: Bob Jellison, Phyllis Mottola, and Carla Scheidlinger.

The Iraq Crisis and U.S. Energy Policy

While U.S. citizens puzzle over the real reasons for the move toward war with Iraq, the oil industry and its supporters in Congress and the Administration are pushing for more oil development in environmentally sensitive areas. They argue that national security necessitates putting oil production above environmental protection, and demand access to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and new offshore areas.

One measure, introduced by Senator Frank Murkowski (R-AK), would have required an oil leasing schedule for all public lands--including wildlife refuges, national forests and marine sanctuaries--in order of their estimated production potential. It would have allowed the President to list the protected areas he wanted to open to oil and gas development when oil imports exceed 50% of U.S. demand. The U.S. is now importing nearly 49% of its oil. This and other legislation to open the ANWR to oil exploration were not passed, but similar attempts are expected in the next Congress.

Environmentalists and energy experts have called for development of a long-overdue energy policy with an emphasis on conservation. The Motor Vehicle Fuel Efficiency Act (Senator Richard Bryan, D-NV) would have mandated implementation of stricter auto efficiency standards over the next 10 years. When fully functioning these standards would save 2.8 million barrels of oil a day--nearly five times the amount of oil imported from Iraq and Kuwait.

Had the last schedule of fuel efficiency standards (passed in 1975) been followed, we would be less dependent on oil imports today. But the Reagan Administration rolled back standards every year beginning in 1986. In that year alone, the resulting increase in oil consumption was 295,300 barrels a day--more than the maximum amount the oil industry hopes to extract from the ANWR (and there is an 81% chance there is no recoverable oil in the ANWR). Despite its public support, the Bryan bill failed to pass the Senate when Michigan Democrat Donald Riegle led two separate filibusters. The first was ended by a cloture vote, but the second cloture vote failed after pressure from the auto industry and President Bush convinced 11 Senators to change their votes. Bryan plans to reintroduce this bill next year.

Conservation measures can save more oil than new development can produce and can do so faster. Short-term measures, such as increased use of car pools and mass transit, could reduce oil consumption enough to make up the amount of oil previously supplied by Iraq and Kuwait. A 12% decrease in vehicle miles traveled (about 3 miles/day) could immediately save this amount of oil. The total estimated potential of the ANWR and the Outer Continental Shelf is 6.1 billion barrels. Auto fuel efficiency standards of 60 miles per gallon for cars and 45 mpg for light trucks would save 29 billion barrels by 2020. Fully insulated houses and more efficient furnaces and water heaters would save 12 billion barrels by 2020. Adoption of these and other conservation measures could reduce U.S. energy use by up to 70% while maintaining or improving energy services. Studies by national laboratories, some sponsored by the Department of Energy, show that these savings are feasible with today's technology and would be far less costly than development of new oil resources.

Between 1973 and 1986, government policies for national energy efficiency and self-sufficiency resulted in no increased energy consumption while the gross national product grew by 35%. During this period there was a drop in carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions of 2.3%. But government support for conservation and conversion to safe alternative energy sources were undermined and reversed by the Reagan Administration. Federal auto fuel efficiency standards were rolled back, the Department of Energy failed to adopt strict efficiency standards for appliances and housing, and utility companies promoted consumption rather than conservation. Between 1986 and 1989, energy used increased 9½% and CO_2 emissions increased 9%; U.S. imports of OPEC oil more than doubled.

Thus far, President Bush is continuing with this anti-conservation stance. It appears that strong and vocal public pressure will be necessary to reverse this destructive policy.

---Phyllis Mottola

A Time to Speak Out

At this moment in history, we, the American People, have a unique and probably unprecedented opportunity to prevent what military experts agree would be a long and bloody war.

A few months ago hopes for world peace were brighter as the cold war was declared to be over, startling changes were taking place in Eastern Europe, and there was talk of a "peace dividend." With the possibility of reduced military spending we looked forward to opportunities for rechanneling funds into desperately needed domestic social programs and environmental protection and restoration.

It appeared that the financial hemorrhage of military spending, which has drained all nations worldwide, might at last subside, freeing national resources for use in life-supporting projects and programs.

At the beginning of the Iraq crisis we saw encouraging attempts to respond in a non-violent way from a base of united world opinion. There was nearly universal condemnation of Iraq's aggression and a willingness to participate in economic sanctions, recognizing that it would take some months for this tactic to be effective.

President Bush has succeeded in getting U.N. agreement to use military force, and American troops in the Middle East will number half-a-million by the first of the year--close to the maximum number we had in Vietnam. But U.S. Middle-East and military experts are urging a cautious approach. Public support for military action has declined as people have begun to realize what war with Iraq would really mean, and a "new peace movement" is forming. While continuing to rationalize the war option, President Bush now says we will negotiate with Iraq.

Those of us who oppose war must not remain silent at this critical time. Now is the time to phone the White House and our elected representatives, and to urge like-minded friends to do the same. Together we may be able to prevent this war.

---Phyllis Mottola

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formal declaration is one too ghastly to contemplate in this situation, and Congress should not, and probably will not, allow it to happen. The knee-jerk desire to teach a lesson to a bully is starting to be examined critically.

What alternatives are there to a massive military confrontation? The possibility of a negotiated settlement has not been seriously considered, in the opinion of many analysts. Bush's condition for negotiating is an unconditional and complete Iraq pull-out from Kuwait. This condition is not one we can expect Saddam to meet, as it would involve excessive humiliation. Setting unmeetable conditions is not advisable if one is serious about getting an adversary to the bargaining table. Furthermore, the economic sanctions have not been given adequate time to be fully effective. For Bush to have declared them to be of insufficient utility betrays a truly dangerous impatience. Brzezinski points out that if the U.S. were to state its goals as a policy of "punitive deterrence," we would be able to accurately view every day since the imposition of the sanctions as a success, in that we are deterring any further aggression, and we are continuing to punish Iraq, to the tune of about $100 million per day. The role of the United Nations has not been exhausted either. Initiating U.N.-sponsored dialogue could be an important step in de-escalating the conflict.

A nation unwilling to examine fully the alternatives for peace may never get beyond the instinctual urge to go to war. We need to examine now more than ever the political, economic, human and ecological consequences of a war in the Persian Gulf. The unexamined assumption that it's "the only way" could prove to be an extremely dangerous one.

---Carla Scheidlinger

Projected Costs of War with Iraq

The likely total costs of a U.S. invasion of Iraq would be high. The U.S. could expect to sustain approximately 45,000 casualties, about 10,000 of which would be deaths, and possibly 1000 missing in action (MIA) and prisoner of war (POW). The Iraqi military would suffer about 150,000 casualties, of which 35,000 would be deaths. Another 40,000 Iraqis would be MIA/POW. Arab and European forces would suffer 10-15,000 casualties. Civilian casualties from air attacks and the battle for Baghdad might exceed 100,000.

The financial cost would also be high. Including both the initial deployment of forces, actual fighting, and a one-year occupation force the grand total would be approximately $50 Billion. That sum does not include replacement costs for extensive losses of military equipment, nor peripheral costs of creating and supporting a new Iraqi government, higher oil product prices, and the effect of increased interest rates on the American economy.

The political costs of a major war in the Middle East and the destruction of the existing Iraqi government are incalculable. The U.S. will likely find itself with huge new burdens in this turbulent region.

A Message from Greenpeace and the American Peace Test...

Nuclear Testing Must Stop!

Help end our 20-year campaign against nuclear testing. Join Greenpeace, the American Peace Test, and activists from around the world when we gather in Las Vegas on Jan. 4, and the Nevada Test Site on Jan. 5, 1991.

We want a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The United States Government is the only major stumbling block to such a treaty.

From Jan. 7-18, 1991, 118 nations will meet in New York City at the United Nations Building in an effort to persuade the United States and other nuclear nations to begin work on a comprehensive test ban treaty.

We must raise our collective voice in loud protest once again and bring whatever public pressure we can on the Bush Administration to stop the nuclear madness, to stop nuclear testing, to stop nuclear weapons production and proliferation.

We plan to gather on Friday, Jan. 4, 1991, to talk with activists from around the world, to share experiences, and to strategize. The next day we will meet at the nuclear test site where the United States and Great Britain detonate deadly nuclear weapons.

Conference

Friday, January 4, 1991

Sahara Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada

A one-day, unconventional conference will be held in Las Vagas to enable activists to meet, network, and plan direct actions.

Bearing Witness

Saturday, January 5, 1991

Nevada Test Site

Beginning at 10:30 AM at the entrance of the Nevada Test Site, a nonviolent, empowering protest demonstration will be held to bear witness to the destructiveness of nuclear weapons testing.

Greenpeace and APT urge you to join in these activities. Help organize. Call your friends and relatives. Write to the President to demand a Comprehensive Test Ban. Come to Nevada on Jan 5, 1991.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS, CALL:
GREENPEACE: 702-286-9834

LEGISLATIVE REPORT AND ACTION ALERT

GULF CRISIS: Persistent grassroots efforts may yet stop the war in the Gulf. Here in the United States, support for the President's military response grows steadily weaker. Your concern and your important questions seem to be getting through to many members of Congress and to the press. Peace activists, some military people, religious congregations, community leaders, and both liberals and conservatives are expressing the same messages: Offensive military action would be unwise; patience is a virtue; give the sanctions time; negotiate peacefully. A tremendous movement for peace has come together in a matter of a few months.

UN ACTION: On November 29, the United Nations Security Council approved a resolution to authorize the use of all means necessary to liberate Kuwait. Twelve nations voted yes, Yemen and Cuba voted no, and China abstained. The US portrays this resolution as approval for offensive military action against Iraq after January 15. However, contrary to President Bush and the US media, the resolution does not mention nor approve military action. Indeed, in order to approve a specific military initiative after January 15, the UN Security Council would have to take an additional action. A wide range of specific, non-military actions also fit under the general heading "all means necessary."

ACTION REQUEST: Call or write President Bush urging him not to initiate offensive military action in the Middle East and to give the UN supported embargo of Iraq every opportunity to succeed. You might mention that the projected casualties (see page 3) are unacceptable. Urge the President to exercise the vision and courage required for a peaceful resolution to this conflict.

ADDRESS: President Bush
The White House
Washington DC 20500

White House Comment Line: (202) 456-1111

NEXT MEETING
Sunday, December 16
393 Mt Tom Rd, Bishop

POTLUCK DINNER 6 pm
MEETING 7 pm
Call 873-8439 for directions

Sierra Nevada Alliance for Peace
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